

REMARKS

This application has been amended so as to place it in condition for allowance at the time of the next Official Action.

The Official Action objects to the specification as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. The Official Action identifies the recited feature relating to the shape of the stopper, with particular reference to the use of the term "frustocone" in claim 14; the recitation of a generally planar second portion in claim 15; and the feature of the frustocone shape of the stopper facing the object in claims 19-20. The Official Action acknowledges that each of the features identified above is disclosed in the drawings as originally filed, but not specifically identified in the narrative portion of the specification.

Applicant has canceled those claims that use the term "frustocone" as well as the claims that identify the direction to which the frustocone pointed. With respect to the first and second portion of the stopper including a first section having a shape of a planar ring, and a second section having a shape of a side face of a circular truncated cone, applicant notes that the original specification provides full support. On page 4, beginning on line 19, the specification identifies a ring-shaped (washer-shaped) flare stopper. The inner portion 31a of the flare stopper 31 is dented with respect to the outer portion

thereof, and the inner periphery 31a has the form of the side face of a circular truncated cone.

This is believed to provide full support for all of the features of the invention now recited. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are therefore respectfully requested.

The Official Action rejects claims 1, 6, 14, 15, 18, and 20 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over AZAMI et al. 5,568,322 in view of KOHMOTO et al. 5,276,552. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested for the following reasons:

Of the rejected claims, claims 15, 18, and 20 are canceled by the present amendment.

Of the remaining claims, claims 1 and 6 are independent. The Official Action relies on the primary AZAMI et al. reference for all of the features recited in the rejected claims but for the inner periphery of the flare stopper having a side surface of a circular truncated cone. It is this feature for which the secondary KOHMOTO et al. reference is offered.

Applicant has amended each of independent claims 1 and 6 to explicitly recite that the flare stopper comprises a sheet material having an overall shape defined by first and second sections. The first section is recited as having the shape of a planar ring, and the second section having the shape of a side face of a circular truncated cone. Moreover, the outermost

portion of the second section meets the innermost portion of the first section. Additionally, the flare stopper is now recited as comprising a sheet material, and both the first and second sections are portions of the sheet material.

The AZAMI et al. reference discloses an aperture stop 13, but such element is a simple device having a continuous cross section throughout, as best illustrated in Figure 2 of such reference. By comparing the corresponding cross sectional illustration of the present invention such as that of Figures 4-6, it is immediately evident that the sheet material of the present flare stopper has a shape entirely unlike that of the aperture stop 13 of AZAMI et al. Additionally, the light intercepting mask 30 of KOHMOTO et al. provides no teaching or suggestion whatsoever of a flare stopper formed from sheet material having a cross section with two very distinct and discontinuous elements. Accordingly, applicant respectfully suggests that the combination of references fails to render obvious the invention of independent claims 1 and 6 as now amended, or any of the claims that depend therefrom.

The Official Action rejects claims 2-5, 8-12, 16, and 17 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over AZAMI et al. in view of KOHMOTO et al. as in the immediately preceding rejection, and further in view of the admitted prior art of the present application. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested for the following reasons:

Of the rejected claims, claims 16 and 17 are canceled.

Each of the remaining claims depends from one of independent claims 1 and 6, each of which is now amended as discussed in detail in connection with the preceding rejection. The admitted prior art described, for example, on page 1 of the present application no more teaches or suggests the full set of features of the now amended claims, including a shape of the flare stopper to have a cross section formed by two distinct and discontinuous portions, as recited in detail in the claims.

Moreover, the present rejection applies to claim 12. Claim 12 recites that one of the lens elements presses and deforms the flare stopper so that the inner periphery is inclined with respect to the optical axis of the taking lens unit. This characteristic of the invention as recited appears not to be present in any of the applied references. Applicant notes that the analysis underlying the rejection makes no specific reference to claim 12 or the features of such claim.

In light of such recitations and the shortcomings of the prior art, applicant has added new claim 25. Such claim corresponds to the combination of claims 6 and 12, prior to the present amendment of independent claim 6.

For all of these reasons, applicant respectfully suggests that the present obviousness rejection cannot be maintained.

The Official Action rejects claim 19 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over AZAMI et al. in view of KOHMOTO et al. as applied to claim 14, and further in view of EDWARDS 5,121,251. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested for the following reasons:

The additional EDWARDS reference is offered for its asserted teaching or suggestion of the angle of a light intercepting element with respect to the object side of the taking lens. However, irrespective of the ability of this reference to teach or suggest that for which it is particularly offered, it nevertheless fails to overcome the shortcomings of the remaining AZAMI et al. and KOHMOTO et al. references, as discussed in detail above. For at least this reason, applicant respectfully suggests that the present obviousness rejection cannot be maintained.

The Official Action rejects claims 1, 6, 7, and 13 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over KUDO et al. 4,886,342 in view of KOHMOTO et al. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested for the following reasons:

The primary KUDO et al. reference is offered as teaching or suggesting all of the features of the rejected claims except for the inner portion of the flare stopper having an inner periphery that has a side surface of a circular truncated cone.

It is this feature for which the secondary KOHMOTO et al. reference is offered.

However, as with the previously considered AZAMI et al. reference, the KUDO et al. patent describes a light stopper made from a sheet material. However, also as with AZAMI et al., the sheet material has a continuous cross section throughout, and is offered specifically as being entirely planar.

Accordingly, were one of skill in the art to be presented with the teachings of KUDO et al. and KOHMOTO et al., and were one to conclude from the secondary reference that a generally conical shape is preferred, one would not end up with the flare stopper of the present invention, which is specifically recited as comprising a sheet material having two very distinct portions resulting in a discontinuous cross section of a planar portion and a truncated cone portion. Instead, one would almost certainly arrive at the aperture stop 13 of AZAMI et al., which comprises a sheet material and has an angled cross section, but does so with a continuous cross section. This lies in stark contrast to the specifically recited features of the present invention.

Considering both the KUDO et al. and KOHMOTO et al. references applied in the present rejection, as well as all other rejections applied in this action or known by the applicant, there exists no teaching or suggestion of a sheet material flare

stopper having a shape such as that now explicitly recited in the amended claims.

In light of the amendments described above and the arguments offered in support thereof, applicant suggests that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of the same is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or requires further clarification of any of the above points, the Examiner may contact the undersigned attorney so that this application may continue to be expeditiously advanced.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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